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ABSTRACT

The comparative study of the dynamics of the politics of Egypt and Israel is one subject that suggests itself for consideration for inclusion in the curriculum of Saint Joseph's College, New York. This study of a prospective Egyptian/Israeli politics course is divided into the following sections: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Significance of the Subject Matter"; (3) "Why Egypt and Israel"; (4) "Strategies for Teaching the Comparative Politics of Egypt and Israel"; (5) "Tools and Resources for Teaching the Comparative Politics of Egypt and Israel"; (6) "Sample Course Outline"; and (7) "Preliminary Bibliography." The sample course outline (which serves as the basis for a more detailed course syllabus) is based on a 13-week, 3-hour weekly schedule. Several themes would be amplified, and under each theme a set of readings and classroom activities would be assigned. The preliminary bibliography is extensive and separated into Egypt Resources and Israel Resources. It contains listings for books and monographs, professional journals, popular periodicals, Web-based resources, and video programs. (BT)

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Integrating The Study of the Politics of Egypt and Israel Into the Curriculum of Saint Joseph's College, New York*

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I. Introduction

The comparative study of the dynamics of politics of Egypt and Israel is one subject that suggests itself for consideration for inclusion in the curriculum of Saint Joseph's College, New York. As the College considers new ways with which to broaden the intellectual horizon of its students and as it respond to the call of multiculturalism and for greater diversity in all its various manifestations, it seems the opportune time has arrived for this subject to take its place alongside other courses in political science at the College.

II. Significance of the Subject Matter

Egypt and Israel are two of the most, if not the most, important countries in the Middle East today. Geographically, both countries are at the intersection of Africa, Asia and Europe. As such, they also are witness to the meeting and melding of religions, cultures, and civilizations that have had so much influence upon the rest of the world. Historically, their respective peoples can boast of a fascinating history that goes deep into the past from which humanity has derived and inherited rich and valuable knowledge about arts, religion, the sciences, and the humanities.

Contemporarily, both Egypt and Israel have spearheaded peace-making efforts that the region so direly needs. Their model of peace-making making and cooperation – though imperfect and following many years of bloody conflict – have much to offer to other countries in the region. In particular, both countries can show that with peace at hand, they can dedicate their attention, energies and resources towards their respective

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domestic problems, e.g., bringing economic justice, social equity, and political stability to their people.

III. Why Egypt and Israel

The focus on Egypt and Israel in this Curriculum Project, instead of other countries in the region, is suggested by a number of factors. Besides having been the locus of the recently concluded Fulbright summer 2000 Seminars, the two countries offer unique opportunities for critical and comparative study at the college level. For one thing, being the first two countries among former adversaries in the region to sign a bilateral peace treaty, they offer a rich laboratory for research and study as to: a. the conditions that enhance peace; b. the conditions that constrain peace; c. the stages or requisites leading to peace; d. the institutional and structural mechanisms that implement peace; and, e. the leadership qualities, including personality types and management styles, required to attain and maintain peace.

Concomitantly, the role of external forces, e.g., the United States, the European Union, and the Arab League, require to be examined in terms of the degree and quality of involvement. To be examined as well are the domestic forces and the official responses to these forces within Egypt and Israel that have had an impact, either negatively or affirmatively, on these two countries' foreign relations. It is axiomatic among many published studies of foreign relations in the region that domestic forces have a significant constraining effect on the foreign policies of countries. This proposed course will examine the basis of this assertion and verify the degree to which it is valid in the case of both Egypt and Israel.

IV. Strategies for Teaching the Comparative Politics Of Egypt and Israel

The teaching about Egypt and Israel is appropriate at any level of study. Each level, however, brings with it a certain degree of depth, breadth, and degree of rigor commensurate to the level of students anticipated to take the course. At the College, it is anticipated that intermediate to advanced level, i.e., sophomore to senior level, students would take it. It would particularly appeal to social science majors with concentration in political science as a core subject. It would also be offered as an elective course to students majoring in other disciplines but who need to satisfy an elective requirement outside of their major disciplines. Furthermore, it would require students taking the course to shall have taken the course Introduction to Political Science as a pre-requisite by the time they are ready to take this course.

In terms of workload, students would be expected to read anywhere from thirty to forty pages per week from a variety of sources. These pages may be combined from book chapters, journal articles, popular newspaper and magazine commentaries and news items, and official documents, among others.

These readings are apart from a series of reports and critiques that students have to write for the course, and preparation for the mid-term and final examinations. The reports (two of which will be required of each student in the course of the semester) of four to six pages in length, will deal with particular issues and/or problems pertaining to the domestic politics of Egypt and Israel and/or in the relations between these two countries. These critiques, on the other, will pertain to the report of a classmate to which one student will be assigned to prepare a critical commentary on of approximately two to three pages in length. The student will have the utmost leeway in choosing a topic to write on although a number of possible topics will be suggested to them initially. The final decision on a topic belongs to the student although preparation of the report will be done in close consultation with the professor.

In terms of perspectives, the course will premise itself on the assumption that there are a multiplicity of perspectives with which to interpret issues and events relating to Egypt and Israel. These perspectives, furthermore, may be equally valid or that some may be more valid than others. Final assessment and interpretation will be left to the freedom and discretion of the individual student as each student develops a line of critical and interpretive analysis of his or her own accord based on carefully and thoughtfully accumulated knowledge, information, and experience in the course of the semester. By using and encouraging this approach, it is hoped that a healthy exchange of ideas – many of which may be divergent – in a spirit of understanding and tolerance would prevail.

The course also recognizes that any understanding of current and contemporary issues and problems facing both Egypt and Israel requires an appreciation of the past. A historical approach would, therefore, be integrated into the study as a means by which the talent and the genius of the peoples that built civilizations whence Egypt and Israel emerged may be impressed upon the minds of the students. Part of this historical survey will be an examination of the significant signposts that have pointed to where Egypt and Israel are now today. The role of religion, culture, and ideology as mobilizing forces in shaping the contemporary expression of Egyptian and Israeli politics and society would be looked at. Worthy of consideration also is the interaction between these forces, on one hand, in their capacity as agents of social and political change and, on the other, those that wield political power of official positions of government in their capacity as guardians of the established order and as undertakers of a managed change. This course is further premised on the assumption that an examination of these contending domestic forces would allow the student an opportunity to grasp and comprehend the depth of the values and the intensity with which they are held by their respective adherents.

As an integral component of this historical survey, the issue concerning the Palestinians , i.e., in particular, their historical circumstances, their nature as a society, their status as a people living in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli policies under which

they have lived, and their aspiration for independence and self-determination in a state of their own, would all be critically examined as a case study.

This special attention is warranted in a course such as the one being proposed for a number of reasons including the following: 1. The Palestinian question, as has been referred top by numerous commentators, is, as this writer believes, at the core of the search for peace between the Arabs, on one hand, and the Israelis, on the other; 2. The Palestinian Question inextricably links Egypt and Israel on a continuing basis as a matter of mutual concern despite the settlement of many other issues between these two countries in other fronts; 3. The Palestinian Question provides a laboratory in which to examine how the mobilization of various domestic forces within Egypt and Israel impact on the relations between these two countries and how each country struggles to formulate an appropriate policy that is both and at the same time respectful of the peace treaty between them, on one hand, and of what they regards as the just and proper response to Palestinian demands, on the other; and, 4. The Palestinian Question is by itself intrinsically deserving of attention as a basis for comparative analysis of how the international community – particularly through the United Nations – treats and deals with similar conflicts involving minority rights throughout the globe as well as the enforcement of universally applicable principles, rules and norms as bases for common humanity.

V. Tools and Resources for Teaching The Comparative Politics of Egypt and Israel

To carry out the strategies outlined in the preceding section, there needs to be marshaled a series of specific tools and resources without which the course would falter. The tools are necessary for the day-to-day technical implementation of the course governing classroom activities during every session, while the resources provide a pool of substantive information from which each student may rely for his or her own work

The Tools

It goes without saying that an empirical spirit of inquiry will provide the basic foundation for the exchange of information in the classroom. This tool or mode of inquiry will necessarily be critical in that it will seek to inquire into the factual basis of assumptions and to verify assertions that may otherwise pass for knowledge.

One area where this mode of inquiry would come in handy would be in the content analysis of news reports and commentaries in the OpEd pages of popular publications. Such a content analysis – which will be a regular feature of classroom activities – will presumably reveal biases, code words or phrases or otherwise hidden meanings and unstated assumptions that could only be discovered with a sharpened sense

of inquiry. More often than not, these biases, hidden meanings, and assusmsptions reflect the predispositions of the author of the text or of the editorial policy of the publication. The student owes it to himself/herself to discover, uncover, or otherwise expose this bias especially in light of any claim by the author, or by the editors of the publication, to be "impartial" or "objective" in their treatment of a subject matter.

Another indispensable tool of inquiry – essential to the verification of truth – is the use of the simple technique of cross references- The presumption here is that no single source has the final word, or has the ultimate key to a problem. Cross-referencing would enable especially the curious and the resourceful student to arrive closer to the truth of any matter under inquiry with more reliable and more verifiable data.

References that may be cross-checked would include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following: scholarly texts, professional journal articles, popular periodicals, official pronouncements, press releases, personal memoirs, and government publications.

In accordance with some of the major tasks of political science, i.e., empirical understanding and ethical recommendation, and in recognition of the need for any knowledge to be relevant to the resolution of any given problem, students in the course would have the opportunity to articulate and elaborate on their assessment of an event or situation based on their empirical understanding but tempered by their values and beliefs about what is morally and ethically right or wrong. The students, after all, are a product of a social, political, and historical environment; they further belong to a moral universe which is reflected in their conduct of daily life and in their day-to-day conversation with others. The students would be allowed to generate and use their own respective accumulated ethical and moral criteria – balanced by their own empirical understanding – in their process of assessing the policies or actions of government and its officials, and of those by private individuals or groups to the extent that their actions have an impact on the public and on public institutions. To require them to do otherwise would be to run contrary to their natural inclination as human beings. Political actions, after all, are moral actions to the extent that they have motivations and consequences that are either moral in nature or have moral and ethical implications.

The implication of the use of this mode of inquiry in the course is readily discernible. The historical events that have led to the present and contemporary situation in the Middle East, to the current relations between Egypt and Israel, and to the current status of the Palestinian people, all have heavy moral dimensions to them. For instance, no one can escape from the moral responsibility demanded by the present situationceven as the peoples and governments in the region – including those outside the region – exert intensive efforts to fashion a political solution out of the present impasse. The lesson is clear: any political solution has to be adjudged just and fair especially by those who have fallen victims to the absence of justice and fairness.

It is with this realization that the use of this mode of inquiry – and of the tools that social science has to offer – becomes even more urgent and necessary. The social

sciences could offer the tools needed for the empirical understanding, but the social science practitioner, in this case the student, has to generate his/her own criteria based on his/her personal values in determining how this understanding is to be applied.

The Resources

To implement the course, a variety of resources has to be relied upon. These resources may come in the form of **primary materials**, e.g., interviews, government documents, 0personal memoirs, etc.; **secondary materials**; e.g., reference materials such as atlases, encyclopedias, etc.; **scholarly books** and **professional journals**, **popular periodicals**; and **audio-visual kits**, e.g., series of videocassette programs, slide presentations, wall maps, posters, photographs, and **selected artifacts** collected during the seminars; and, finally, **websites** of governments, government agencies, private, issue-oriented organizations, and individuals which may offer pertinent information relevant to the course or, in particular, useful to the student in the preparation of his/her individual work.

The above-materials will be integrated into the course selectively and on a semester-by-semester basis (to use them all at once would be impractical and unnecessary). An annotated bibliography of these materials (in one of the following sections below) will be prepared as a starter, and the students will be asked to prepare their own respective bibliographies that would be more directly relevant to their own projects. Student initiative in the preparation of an annotated bibliography is given premium in this course for a number of reasons including: 1. the instilling of a rigorous discipline in fulfilling course requirements; 2. the instilling of the value of self-reliance and the appreciation of one's accomplishments; and, 3. the orientation or re-orientation on the part of the student of the variety of interrelated subjects that are touched on in the course.

A desirable resource for the course which may potentially be shared with the rest of the College community and not just the immediate participants in the course is a lecture series featuring academicians and/or representatives of certain organizations who have done work and, therefore, have intimate familiarity with and competence in a variety of subjects including, but not limited to, the historical, political, social, and economic conditions in the Middle Eastern region, in general, and in Egypt and Israel, in particular. Ideally, two of these lecturers may be invited per semester that the course is offered, and their lectures be offered free and open to the general public. To carry out this particular program, financial commitment and support from the College administration would be requested first, as part of its outreach to the community; second, as manifestation of its commitment to multiculturalism and diversity; and, third, as part of its dedication to academic excellence and liberal education.

The financial support needed from the College administration – if requested and granted – would defray (as necessary) any and all anticipated expenses for the honorarium, transportation, lodging and meals for the guest(s).

In implementing the lecture series, aside from mobilizing the assistance and participation of all students in the course, the co-sponsorship of the Political Affairs Club, a campus-based service-oriented student organization, might be sought. On the basis of past collaborations between this club and the Department of Social Sciences, the Club would again be requested to prepare and distribute posters and notices around the campus, reserve a hall for the venue of the lecturer(s), prepare refreshments for the guests, and ensure that other devices needed for the lectures, e.g., public address system, lectern, etc., are available and ready for use.

Finally, this writer, throughout his participation in the Summer Seminars, has accumulated a series of video recordings of the various lectures in both Egypt and Israel. These recordings were taken with the permission of the lecturers, who were all competent in their respective subjects. The subjects dealt with in these lectures range from history, politics, economics, culture, media, arts, religion, and the state of academic research and teaching and the related subjects of the role of the academia in society and the state's influence on or policy towards the academic community both in Egypt and Israel. This writer would be remiss if he did not find a way to integrate excerpts of the excellent recordings into the course syllabus as additional resources towards the elucidation of certain topics. Essential as they are, these video recordings would, therefore, form part and parcel of the overall resources for the course.

VI. Sample Course Outline

The following sample outline of the course which will serve as the basis of a more detailed course syllabus, is based on a thirteen-week, three-hour weekly schedule that the College adheres to. In terms of the subject matter, several themes would be amplified. Under each theme, a set of readings would be assigned and a set of classroom activities would be carried out.

Part One. Introduction

Week I. Acquaintance and Introduction to the Comparative Study of Egypt and Israel.

No assigned readings.

Part Two. The Politics of Egypt

Week II. A Survey of the History of Egypt from the ancient Times to the Contemporary Period. Video Presentation and Student Reports. Maps.

Some Guide Questions and research Topics:

1. How may one characterize the pharaonic political system?
2. How did the elites maintain the loyalty and support of the lower classes?
3. What role did religion play in legitimizing the pharaonic political system?
4. What avenues of upward political mobility were available to members of the lower classes?
5. How was ownership of the means of production harnessed to maintain particular relations of power?
6. How did the pharaonic rulers evolve over several periods a policy of administration towards conquered peoples?
7. How would one assess the impact of Egypt's contact with the Graeco-Roman civilizations?
8. What set of conditions led to the demise of the pharaonic political order?

Week III, The Political Institutions of Egypt: The Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Functions. Video Presentation and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one assess the influence of Western colonialism on the formation of contemporary Egyptian political system?
2. What are the major bases of recruitment for the executive branch of government?
3. How might one assess the representativeness of the legislative branch of government?

4. How might one assess the relative independence of the legislature from the executive branch?
5. How might one assess the relative independence of the judiciary from the two other branches of government?
6. How might one assess the overall role of these branches of government towards the development and democratization of Egyptian society?
7. What problems are prevalent in operationalizing these Western- and secular-oriented institutions in a predominantly Islamic society?

Week IV. The Political Institutions of Egypt: The Military and the Civil Bureaucracy Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How does one explain the prominence of the military in contemporary Egyptian politics?
2. What historical conditions and/or antecedents paved the military's prominent contemporary role?
3. What impact has military prominence had on the democratization process?
4. To what extent may one attribute the growth and development of the civil bureaucracy to colonial influence?
5. How might one assess the civil bureaucracy's relative independence from undue political pressures and maintain professionalism in its service?
6. How might one assess the civil bureaucracy's role in policy formulation and implementation?
7. What are the major bases of recruitment for the civil bureaucracy?

Week V. The Political Institutions of Egypt: Civil Society, Political Parties and Interest Groups. Video Presentations and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one classify the political parties in the ideological spectrum?
2. What are the bases of support for these political parties?
3. What conditions contribute to the weakness or strength of civil society?
4. How might one assess the relative influence of ideology and religion in political discourse?
5. What are the bases of support for interests groups?
6. How might one assess the influence of interest groups in policy-making?
7. What are the limitations in the application of the Western-oriented concept of political pluralism in a predominantly non-Western, Islamic society?

Part Three. The Politics of Israel

Week VI. A Survey of the History of Israel from the Ancient Times to the Contemporary Period. Video presentation and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How may one characterize ancient Hebrew society and politics?
2. How did the ancient Hebrew elites maintain the loyalty and support of the lower classes?
3. How did religion play a role in legitimizing the ancient Hebrew political system?
4. What avenues of upward mobility were available to members of the lower classes?
5. What series of historical conditions led to the dispersal of the Jewish people?
6. What impact has the Jewish diaspora had on the birth of Zionism?
7. How does one assess the impact of Zionism on the birth and development of the State of Israel?

Week VII. The Political Institutions of Israel: The Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Functions. Video Presentations and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one assess the influence of Western colonialism on the formation of the contemporary Israeli political system?
2. What are the major bases of recruitment for the executive branch of government?
3. How might one assess the representativeness of the legislative branch of government?
4. How might one assess the relative effectiveness of the Israel's parliamentary form of government?
5. How might one assess the relative independence of the judiciary from the executive and the legislative branches of government?
6. How might one assess the contribution of Israel's parliamentary style of government towards the democratization of Israeli political system?
7. What problems are there in operationalizing Western- and secular-oriented institutions in a predominantly Jewish society?

Week VIII. The Political Institutions of Israel: The Military and the Civil Bureaucracy. Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How does one explain the relative prominence of the military in contemporary Israeli society?
2. What historical conditions and/or antecedents paved the way for the military's contemporary role?
3. What impact has this military prominence had on the democratization of Israeli society?
4. To what extent may one attribute the growth and development of the civil bureaucracy to British colonial influence?
5. How might one assess the civil bureaucracy' relative independence from undue political pressures and maintain professionalism in its service?
6. How might one assess the civil bureaucracy's role in policy formulation and policy implementation?
7. What are the major bases of recruitment for the civil bureaucracy?

Week IX. The Political Institutions of Israel: Civil Society, Political Parties, and Interest Groups. Video Presentation and Student Reports

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one classify the political parties in the ideological spectrum?
2. What are the bases of support for these political parties?
3. How significant are the cultural and political differences between the Askhinazi and the Sephardic Jews in the political process?
4. What conditions contribute to the weakening or the strengthening of civil society?
5. How might one assess the relative influence of ideology and religion in political discourse?
6. How might one assess the influence of interest groups in policy-making?
7. What are the limitations in the application of the Western- and secular-oriented concept of political pluralism in a predominantly Jewish society?

Part Four. Case Analysis: The Palestinian Question.

Week X. History of the Palestinian Question: Egyptian, Israeli, and Palestinian Perspectives. Video Presentation and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one describe and assess the impact of British colonial policy on the origins and development of the Palestinian Question?
2. How might one describe and assess the impact of Arab rejectionism towards the formation of the State of Israel on the contemporary development of the Palestinian Question?
3. How might one describe and assess the immediate impact and consequences of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the contemporary evolution of the Palestinian Question?
4. What are the various dimensions and manifestations of the Palestinian Question?
5. How might one assess the impact of Zionism on the definition of the Palestinian Question?
6. How might one assess the Egyptian perspective on the Palestinian Question?
7. How might one assess the Israeli perspective on the Palestinian Question?
8. How might one assess the impact of continued Jewish settlements the various parts of the Occupied Territories?

Week XI. The Search for Solution to the Palestinian Question: Egyptian, Israeli and Palestinian Perspectives. Video Presentation and Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions Research Topics:

1. What are the conceptual differences between the bilateral and the multilateral approaches to diplomacy in the Middle East?
2. What is the rationale behind the Israeli insistence on the bilateral approach?
3. What is the rationale behind the Arab preference for the multilateral approach?
4. What are the differences between a multilateral approach and the Barcelona Peace Process?
5. What conditions led to the initial rationalization and justification of the use of force by the Palestine Organization (PLO) towards the accomplishment of its aims?

6. What conditions led to the shift in PLO strategy towards diplomacy and negotiated political settlement?
7. What was the initial rationale for the "Land for peace" approach?
8. What impact have small religious political parties in Israel had on the "peace process" with the Palestine National Authority?
9. What is meant by the Israeli policy goal of attaining a "secure and defensible" border with the Palestine National Authority and its other Arab neighbors?
10. What are the basic tenets of the Oslo Accords?
11. How might one assess the current status of the Oslo Accords?

Week XII. The Role of External Mediators: The United States, the European Union, and the Arab League. Student Reports.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics:

1. How might one describe the pattern of United States involvement and/or intervention in contemporary Middle Eastern affairs?
2. How might one describe and assess the religious, ideological, cultural, and strategic affinity between the US and Israel?
3. How may one assess the impact of this apparent affinity of the former (i.e., the US) to serve as a fair and impartial mediator?
4. What political, economic, and strategic considerations have influenced the US role towards the resolution of the Palestinian Question?
5. How might one describe the pattern of European Union (EU) involvement and/or intervention in contemporary Middle Eastern affairs?
6. What political, economic, and strategic considerations have influenced the EU's role towards the resolution of the Palestinian Question?
7. How might one describe the pattern of Arab League involvement and/or intervention in contemporary Middle Eastern affairs?
8. What political, economic, and strategic considerations have influenced the Arab League's role towards the resolution of the Palestinian Question?

Part Five. Prognosis and Conclusion

Week XIII. Review, Prognosis, and Course Evaluation. General Discussion.

Some Guide Questions and Research Topics

1. How might one assess the prospects for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians?
2. What lessons could be learned from previous failures towards confidence-building and peace-making efforts in the Middle East?
3. How might one assess the utility of the Eqyptian-Israeli peace agreement – based on the Camp David Accords – as a model for peace throughout the region?
4. How might one assess the role and degree of involvement on the United Nations towards the resolution of the Palestinian Question? Towards the settlement of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict?
5. How may the struggle over water affect the future relations between Israel and the Palestinians? Between Israel and the Arab countries? Among the Arab countries themselves?
6. What are the long-term prospects for the citizens of Israel of Arab descent living in a predominantly Jewish society?
7. What are the prospects for change of Israeli policy towards the Occupied Territories?
8. What conditions would contribute towards Israeli acceptance and recognition of a Palestinian state?

Part Seven. Preliminary Bibliography

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